

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

DECEMBER 1979

10p

VOL. 8 No. 12

**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . .'
James Connolly

THE IRISHTOWN



THE OLD POLICE BARRACKS, JOHN ST.

POEMS



DESMOND O'GRADY

THE DR. LONG STORY



Limerick Vigilance Committee
Good Literature Barrow.

Haughey's money

CHARLES J. HAUGHEY is the richest man to hold the office of Head of Government since the foundation of the State, far outstripping in wealth any of his six predecessors. He is also the wealthiest man in Dail Eireann, with an estimated net worth approaching £3 million.

If ever the holder of that office was least in need of a Taoiseach's residence, it must be Mr. Haughey. For the past 10 years, he has lived in a house of considerable grandeur at Kinsealy, Co. Dublin. Abbeyville, which stands on 280 acres of land, was designed by James Gandon, the architect of the Custom House. It is a 12 bedroom Georgian mansion with four splendid reception rooms and a ballroom. And the yard at the rear contains the stables where Mr. Haughey keeps his valuable horses.

Mr. Haughey bought Abbeyville in the spring of 1969 for an undisclosed sum from its previous owner, Mr. Percy Reynolds, a racehorse owner. Based on the prevailing price of agricultural land at the time, and the exceptional quality of the house itself, it is possible to say that the deal cost no more than £200,000. At today's prices, the value of the estate has been estimated by auctioneers at not less than £1.25 million.

This is based on the fact that the land involved is zoned for agricultural use. If it was re-zoned for housing development, estate agents estimate that it would be worth as much as £2.8 million. However, a change in zoning is unlikely, despite the large-scale development that has been taking place in the Malahide area over the past 10 years. In any case, it is highly improbable Mr. Haughey would want to sell his estate in the foreseeable future.

He bought the estate in February, 1969, with the aid of a bridging loan from the Northern Bank Finance Corporation. It was purchased not under his own name but by a company called Abbeyville Limited, set up specifically for the purpose of concluding the deal. The address of its registered office was given as 61 Amiens Street. This is also the address of Haughey Boland and Company, with which Mr. Haughey says he ended his association in 1966.

After concluding the purchase of Abbeyville, Mr. Haughey then sold his previous home, Grangemore, a rambling Victorian mansion standing on 45 acres of land near Raheny. In a highly controversial deal, he sold the house and land to the Gallagher Group for £204,000 — a huge sum by 1969 standards. The Gallaghers had planning permission for 386 houses on the estate, which had been re-zoned for development by the Dublin Corporation. But, in the lead-up to the general election in June 1969, the deal was seized on by Fine Gael spokesmen, who claimed that Mr. Haughey had evaded paying tax on the transaction.

Mr. Haughey would not disclose what he paid for the Grangemore estate when he bought it in 1960. But, based on the prevailing price for agricultural land at the time, and taking into consideration its proximity to Dublin, it is likely that the estate cost him no more than £10,000. It must be remembered that this was a considerable sum of money in 1960, when most people were lucky enough to be earning £10 a week. But Mr. Haughey could afford it because he had been conducting a highly successful accountancy business for the previous 10 years.

Mr. Haughey is said to have been the main driving force in the company, and he set about the business of "selling it" to potential clients in the business world. In 1951, he married Maureen, the daughter of Mr. Sean Lemass. As the decade wore on, with Mr. Haughey being elected to the Dail on his third attempt in 1957, the ac-

countancy business boomed. It attracted the custom of many new companies, and several older firms, who, apparently, felt that it would give them preferential access to the Government. Harry Boland, incidentally, was secretary of TACA, the controversial Fianna Fail fundraising vehicle.

When Mr. Haughey became a parliamentary secretary in 1960, he remained on as a "sleeping partner" in his accountancy firm. This remained the case for the succeeding six years, during which he served as Minister for Justice and Minister for Agriculture, but he has said that he severed his connection with the firm when he took over as Minister for Finance in 1966. At the time of the controversy over the Raheny land sale, Mr. Haughey was defended by the then Taoiseach, Mr. Lynch, who made the point that he was "a well-off man before he became a Minister in our Government, and he would be a far better off man if he never took office in Government".

A year later, in 1970, Mr. Haughey was sacked from the Government and later went on trial for his alleged role in the arms crisis. After his acquittal, he turned his mind to horses and his new home at Kinsealy. It was in this period too that he bought Inishvickillaune, the second-largest of the Blasket Islands, eight miles off Sleah Head, on the Co. Kerry coast. Again, the purchase price has never been disclosed, although estate agents speculate that it could not have been more than £20,000 and probably much less. The man from whom he bought the island was a local small farmer who lives in Dunquin.

In 1975, Mr. Haughey had work started on the construction of a house on the island. By all accounts, it is quite substantial for a holiday home, with solar panels for heating and a windmill for electricity generation. The construction costs were enormous because much of the building materials were brought out from Dunquin using a leased helicopter. Last summer, when the house was being extended, the helicopter was a familiar sight as it whirred to and fro over the Blasket Sound. The present value of the island, including the house, is estimated at about £250,000, and more, if a Continental buyer was involved.

Mr. Haughey and his family frequently travelled to the island for their summer holidays by helicopter. But, last year, he bought a 50-year-old trawler for £35,000 and had it refitted for family use and it was estimated to have cost a further £15,000. The family now use their new boat on the 300-mile sea journey from Dublin to Inishvickillaune in the summer time. The fact that they spend only three months of the year there led to protests in the Dail when it was learned that a telephone had been installed in their island home. But, the privilege was defended on the basis that Mr. Haughey had priority as a Minister and Dail deputy.

Miss Cossie was the first in a long line of horses acquired by Mr. Haughey over the years. In August, 1964, another of his horses, The Chaser, won the Newlands Handicap at the Phoenix Park, and there were to be more successes later. But, it was not until Mr. Haughey made the move from Raheny to Kinsealy in 1969 that he got down to the serious business of breeding bloodstock. In January, 1971, for example, he turned down a £50,000 offer for a five-year-old gelding which he had bought the previous year for £10,000. The horse, Vulferno, had won four minor races in the meantime.

Haughey, himself, was concentrating more and more on the business of breeding, and it was not surprising that he was asked to join the board of the Ballsbridge International Bloodstock Sales when it was set up in 1974.

The distillery malediction*

by Michael Hogan

Heaven's blazing vengeance on thee dwell,
 Thou mouthpiece of infernal hell!
 How many hearths hast thou left void?
 How many immortal souls destroyed?
 How many times has hell rejoiced
 To see the conquered blood of Christ
 Annulled by thee and shed in vain
 For souls by thee for ever slain?
 Perdition's fire cup brimmed with flame
 To roast the soul and broil its frame;
 And hurl it like volcanic clod,
 In smoking wreck before its God.
 Huge pot that seeths the devil's broth!
 Provoker of the Lord's fierce wrath!
 For by thy thrice-accurst potation
 You kill his best part of Creation.
 Black Fiddler of hell's jigs and reels,
 With all hell's ruins round thy heels;

Dark inkstand of destruction's Book

Where damned ones' names are scrawled and stuck;
 Helper of hell's eternal years,
 Brewer of hell's eternal tears;
 Sink into hell's eternal hole,
 Thou murderer of the eternal soul!
 While the hossannas of the damned
 Upon each others tortures crammed,
 O'er thy destruction shall arise
 In wrathful curses to the skies;
 Sink thou in perdition's flame
 Roof and rafter, floor and beam!
 Even as the foul Gommorra fell
 Smitten by the blasts of hell,
 With brimstone hail and thunder driven
 In devouring flames from heaven
 Like that curst City down you'll go,
 Cesspool of eternal woe!
 While odious worms and putrid mud
 Shall curse the spot on which you stood.

* Occasioned by the death of the Author's nephew, who was instantaneously smothered by falling into a vat of fermenting liquor in that unholy concern so often notorious for the destruction of human life.

That same year, Mr. Haughey sold a mare Abbeville (named after his Kinsealy home) to the German Schockemohle stables, where Eddie Macken was to make his name. The horse was said to have potential as an Olympic jumper, and the price was reported to be in the region of £40,000. Three years later, in 1977, he sold a grey filly for £28,000, and a yearling colt for £15,000 at a sale in Goff's, Kill, Co. Kildare.

Also in 1977, just before he became Minister of Health, Mr. Haughey's three-year-old colt, Aristocracy, won a race worth £4,000 at the Phoenix Park. The same horse, now a five-year-old stallion, was bought only last week by Bord na gCapall. The price was £10,000 — one of the highest prices ever paid by the board for a stallion. It seems odd that Bord na gCapall should have had to travel to England and bid against foreign competition to bring the horse back home.

It was at Newmarket that Mr. Haughey acquired what is probably his most expensive horse to date when he paid over £66,000 for a yearling named Rodolfo last year. The horse has been in training with the Vincent O'Brien stables, but it has proved to be something of a disappointment as a two-year-old. Another of his horses, Basket Sound, is being trained by Jim Dreaper, and it came second in a maiden hurdle at Fairyhouse last Saturday. And, at Goff's last September, Mr. Haughey sold three yearlings for £25,000, £17,000 and £3,400.

Mr. Haughey is believed to have up to 30 horses — including 10 broodmares — in his stables at Kinsealy and, no doubt, he will continue as a breeder, earning money both from sales and from horse-racing. He also keeps a large herd of drystock cattle on the 280-acre farm. Until three years ago, Mr. Haughey owned another farm at Ashbourne, Co. Meath, but he sold the 100-acre holding for a sum believed to be in the region of £300,000.

Mr. Haughey is said to be an expert judge of champagne and vintage port, and he is also reputed to be a connoisseur of good claret. His Kinsealy home is furnished almost exclusively, with high-quality antiques, and each room bears evidence of his interest in art. The walls are adorned with paintings from his collection of old masters and contemporary works. Fast cars also engaged his interest. In May, 1972, he suffered the indignity of having to bail out his Jaguar XJ6 from the Dublin Corporation car pound, after it had been towed away from Dawson Street where he had parked it illegally.

In June, 1978, a year after Fianna Fail's return to office, Mr. Haughey threw open the doors of Abbeville for an invitation dance in the ballroom. Tickets were £25 a head and the proceeds were destined for the party's coffers. Apart from political cronies, his circle of friends seems to be limited to self-made men like himself, whether in the business, or artistic world. There are no intellectuals, or academics, among them.

Life has been good to Charlie Haughey, and he clearly enjoys it. With his estimated wealth of £3 million, he has come a long way from his Donnycarney days when he was the scholarship boy who had nothing. But there is persistent speculation about his involvement in business deals in Dublin and other parts of the country. However, the truth will probably never be known, at least not until there is a provision obliging Government Ministers and even Dail deputies, to disclose the extent of their wealth and income, and declare their interests in any activities outside parliament. Certainly, Mr. Haughey, himself, seems to be in no rush to make a full declaration. All he would say on the subject of his wealth at his press conference last Friday was: "Ask my bank manager".

(Frank McDonald, Irish Times, 14/12/'79).

Up and down the Irishtown

PART NINE

THE TOWN WALL

by John Bennis

The Patriotic Powers had repainted the pillar boxes from red to green but had failed to notice the incongruity of that house of shame, the Labour Exchange - a canker in the heart of Limerick, looking down on Georgian O'Connell Street.

The clerk took down my name and address. I told him I was seventeen and had worked with builders. He looked doubtful but wrote some more and handed me a green slip. I went back to the wall and waited. Mickey also gave his name and address. "What age are you?" Mickey's mouth opened. I could have said an Act of Contrition before the clerk turned and shouted across the room: "What age are you?" The room exploded in guffaws. I fled.

At supper I broke the good news to mother. "A job. What kind of a job? A messenger boy's?" Father sat at the window reading. Mother told him the news. He put down the paper and took off his specs. "When I give him permission to work in the Shannon Scheme there'll be two rooms over Grattan Street", he declared.

Three weeks later rumour had it that a local timber merchant was looking for boys. Going up Cathedral Place I said: "Let me do the talking". Mickey said: "You're a better liar than me." As I approached there were grand words in my head. The office clerk kept his nose in his work. The office was quiet. Out in the yard the great saws made strange, ceaseless, human-like talk, buzzing, whining, snarling, droning, singing, laughing, fighting, crying, always changing.

The window shutter slammed open. "Well boys?" Mickey said: "We want work." The clerk smiled. "Go over and see the foreman." A small, thin man stood on a pile of timber, roaring like the Bay of Biscay. I took off my cap. "I hear, sir, you're looking for boys to back saws". He looked at my polished boots and Britannia hair. "For the love and honour of God, is it trying to cod me ye are? Sure 'tis women ye want not work".

It put Mother in bad humour. "I declare to God," she bit the words. "I declare to God you'd want a letter from the Pope of Rome to get a job in Limerick unless you were Protestant!" I thought she was sorry I wasn't a Protestant.

From Donnellan's field, a stone's throw from Watch House Cross, boggy trains carried men and materials to Parteen and Ardacrusha. There was always an empty boggy or two. One's right to a free jaunt was never questioned. Ardacrusha, or The Height of the Cross, was a lovely name, though I saw neither height nor cross only a scrub-thick hollow, alive with birds and rabbits.

A nest of wild dogs, with a litter of pups, was discovered there in a burrow. The dog fanciers knew all about these things. "Don't touch 'em, the bitch'll ate you." Next evening, backed by half a dozen mongrels, the burrow was assailed. While the bitch was engaged, the pups, biting and snarling, were stuffed under coats and ganses.

My mother wanted to know where I got the little savage and said: "You'll have to get his tail cut. Bring him down to Rocks Morrissey." People would say of Rocks: "He's a butt of oak. He doesn't know his own strength." It was said that he could toss a blacksmith's anvil over the pier wall. That was before he fell down the ship's hold and said a soldier's farewell to coal heaving.

A month passed and still no word came from the

National Health Department. The only help available was a few shillings grudging by the Dispensary. There were also a few coppers to be picked up in the Irishtown holding horse's leads. On Saturday's countrymen loaded up provisions from Nan Riley's, Tom Peppard's and Dan Keogh's flour, meal and bran store and some of them slipped a majum (medium) of porter at Tommy Campbell's or John White's.

Then came the Great Idea, The Dog Tail Remover. This work gave general satisfaction and no assignment was refused, sex, size or breed. The fee was optional. "I'll leave it to yourself, ma'am."

Almost three hundred years ago a French general, the great, haughty, jealous St. Ruth said this, the Town Wall could be knocked down with roasted apples. History proved him wrong. At the east end of Grattan Street a section of the Town Wall, or as it was later to be called, the Pier Wall, still stands. The wall loomed large in the people's lives. It sheltered shawl-wrapped square-pushers who learned of love well within earshot of anxious mothers. Daughter's names were called as the late hour of eleven struck the time for all respectable people to be off the streets.

Street arabs, tired of taws and pegging tops, or just to get away from the screaming girls playing "Cat" or "Pickey" or skipping, climbed up the rough old wall-face. Up there, high above the pigmy houses, one could have a quiet game of Pontoon or Brag, and light up a butt when the coast was clear. Every boy has a hero. The Pier Wall, through close association with days and events long gone by, offered us three - Patrick Sarsfield, Galloping Hogan and the Blacksmith of Limerick.

On Sunday morning at the tossing schools I was lucky enough to box-man and, as I picked up the two ha'pennies and wiped them for the tosser, I ignored my mother's calls to come home for dinner, knowing that when the school was broke I'd be a fistful of coppers the richer.

Once Bacchus paid the Town Wall a visit by way of a barrel of porter "borrowed" from the Guinness store on the canal bank. The barrel was transported on Duck 'Em Joe's handcart. Joe was a performer who jumped up and down in a barrel, while countrymen threw clumps at his head when it appeared above the rim of the barrel. A timing mistake put Joe out of business for three months.

The south end of the Pier Wall abutted Byrne's orchard but the apples were never robbed. Who'd want to bite the hand the fed us with the windfalls lobbed over the garden wall?

One day when the boys were playing cards I looked down at the Back Clare Street yard. A man with a whip under his arm was urinating behind a shed. He looked up, saw us on the wall and shouted: "Get off that wall!" Bunker Greaney answered him by pulling a rock from the wall and dropping it on the galvanised roof of the shed. The man cursed and waved his whip. Bunker gave him the dummy's curse and dropped another rock and shouted: "Fock you. You won't be so quick with your whip next time we jump on the back of your ould car".

I got off the wall the quick way by Byrne's orchard where the grips were good. I ran up the lane thinking of confession. As I passed Biddy Byron's door I sidestepped

POEMS by JOHN MINAHANE

SHALLOW ONES, PASS BY ME

Shallow ones, pass by me,
For I am not your friend;
College bards, deny me,
I loathe what you have penned;
Workers, coolly eye me,
For you may comprehend;
But do not seek, who'er you be,
For frivolous things of flattery.

"THE PRICE IS TOO HIGH"

The pop songs on the radio
Have all the identical tune,
Though one presumes to be beauty
And another a slow, romantic croon;
Though one may tell of a girl who won't
The next of a girl who will,
Each singer screams, as one who burns,
Over and over, still
That bitter, hopeless cry:
"Too many people are lost;
The price is too high!"

IN PRAISE OF OUR CLIMATE

Only in shadowy parts of the world I bear to be,
I would die in the impudent sunshine of dusty Italy,
Cool breezes I wish for, and nights when a raindrop in-
trudes on the dew,
And moderate, sceptical noons when the grey overbears
the blue.

TO MODERN POETS

How sorry you are for yourselves, my dears,
Professionally overwrought!
One would think this was only a Vale of Tears,
Not also a Vale of Struggle and Thought.

a bucket of sweet violets flung willy-nilly from the black
interior. "You bloody ould bitch. Wouldn't you mind what
you're doing?" I shouted to the face stuck out to gawk af-
ter me. "Kiss me - you Grattan Street get!" I wouldn't
kiss her face and 'twas more often washed.

I crossed over the New Road. As I passed St. John's
Hospital gate I looked in at the Black Battery. I had two
heroes. The Blacksmith of Limerick came second only
because he was dead and Brother Martin was alive.

The Blacksmith raised his hammer
And rushed into the street,
His 'prentice boys behind him
The ruthless foe to meet.
High on the breach of Limerick,
With dauntless hearts they stood,
While bombshell burst and shot fell thick
And redly ran the blood.

The first that topped the rampart,
He was a Captain brave,
A Captain of the Grenadiers,
With bloodstained dirk and glave,
He pointed and he parried
But it was all in vain
For fast through skull and helmet

AT PORTADOWN STATION

At Portadown, beside the track,
The sandstone houses, back to back,
Stand shamefully in shabby line
Like Jews to bath in Belsen's brine;
Their faces chequered all with crude
Grey squares of brick, as if tattooed;
Oblivious to all suns that rise
As corpses with their fastened eyes.

Flung back or smashed, the skylight yawn,
And missing slates, like teeth long drawn,
Uncover skinny, rotting beams.
Deserted all the terrace seems
(Spite of the aerials overhead,
Pharoah's convenience for the dead).
Bare trees look o'er the roofs behind,
Lean giants, hunters of mankind.
But further to the Belfast side,
A doughty one seems occupied:
Battered, but scowling through full panes,
Defiant, at vicarious trains.
Two shy red chimney-pots outpour
A little smoke, and through the foor
The voice comes, resonant with life,
Of Noah calling to his wife.

TERENCE McSWINEY'S GHOST
SPEAKS TO THE PROVOS

A people of split mind should not make war
On a people of whole mind. Why do you fight?
What is your independent principle?
The wings of spirit have melted on the Irish;
They gravitate back to the British earth.

Mazzini knew, though I believed him wrong
And died to prove it: not for many days
Did Ireland have a mission on the earth.
Look to the South, where the depending spirit,

Turns hypocrite rather than know its change;
Be reconciled and put away your guns.
War of West Britain against North-West Britain
Can come to nothing.

The hammer found his brain.

The next to top the rampart
He was a Colonel bold
A Colonel and stalwart,
With sword of beaten gold.
Gold is no match for iron,
The doughty Blacksmith said,
As with his ponderous hammer
He cracked the foeman's head.

A great day for Limerick that day was, no thanks to that
traitor Fennell. Did they ever catch the skunk? Wasn't he
an Irishman? English gold... ah yes, we were always
good at selling the pass.

The English must have been sick to the gills pounding
away night and day with all they had and not a crack to
show in the Town Wall, 'till Fennel did the dirty work
with gunpowder. The rat! The English poured through the
breach, and the Irish fell back down John St. to the hill of
Mungret Street. Then by God! the screeching women
rushed out swinging stockings loaded with stones and
broken bottles. Hurrah! Look at the English now falling
ass over appetite through Fennel's hole!

Notes On

THE DR. LONG STORY

PART FIVE

The following letter appeared in the Daily Express and Belfast News-Letter:—

THE LAW IN LIMERICK
To the Editor of the Belfast News-Letter.

Sir — I would ask you to make the following facts public: — On Friday, the 31st May, my daughter being ill, I sent for Dr. Long. On that night the door of my room was broken in by a mob, who crowded up the stairs from the street. This is a tenement house, in which we are the only Protestant family. The landlord is Mr. Stephen Hannan, of 20, Broad Street. The only window in the room, containing twelve panes of glass, had five panes broken by stones thrown into the room. Our baby, four months old, was sleeping in its cot beneath the window, and has since been lying beneath the broken window. When my wife went out on Sunday to get some water she was stoned and her can smashed. There were, I understand, two arrests made by the police. On Sunday evening the Rev. Timothy Lee, a Roman Catholic priest, came into my room and remarked, "Well, is it you who is causing all this annoyance?" My wife told him it was not; that she did not know why the annoyance was being caused. He then said, "It is a nice place you have nested yourselves amongst my people". I told him if they were his people they were a disgrace to the clergy of Limerick. He said, "Be cool, my buck; you will only have half of it, and you won't have the best of it". I went to the door and asked him to leave the room; that we did not belong to his religion, and did not want him. Instead of going out he walked over to the window and said he would stop as long as he liked; that Dr. Long was not a proper person to bring amongst his people. He asked how long were we Protestants. I replied, "Since we were born". He then left the room. On the 4th June I received a letter from the landlord, who had asked us on Monday morning to leave the room by that night. In that letter he says — "Don't place much reliance on the police for protection, as what can a few men do in face of a large mob? If you take a friend's advice you will leave the locality as soon as you can ... You know you can have no pleasure in remaining where you are. You may as well be in prison as stay there. (This is perfectly true). ... If the Doctor calls again all the people will say you are defying them, which will make matters a thousand times worse, and I fear something serious will happen". On the 5th June I was served with a notice to quit my room by the 17th inst. This notice being signed by Mr. Hannan's agent, James Monaghan. Every time I or any member of my family appear in the street we are stoned, or even if we look out of the window. As the result of fatigue — watching throughout the night — and a wetting. I am now obliged to remain in my bed, and feel my chest and sides very sore; but I cannot call in any medical aid or get any assistance, not even food. The water was turned off, the key taken away, so that we have been without water for forty-eight hours. My wife and daughter went out on Friday morning, and a crowd followed them, and a woman struck my wife, cutting her lip, while my daughter was hit on the eye, which is black. My wife went to John Street Barrack, and reported the matter to the head constable, who sent a constable to see her home. My daughter, having got a situation in the King's County, was obliged to procure a police escort to the railway station when she was leaving on Friday evening. On last night (Friday) a rabble lit a tar-barrel underneath my broken window, and the room was filled with smoke, so that the

baby, my wife, and young daughter (aged eight years), and myself were nearly suffocated. I will thank you to make these facts public. I am only a working man, but now am deprived of my earning owing to my illness.

Your obedient servant,
Hugh McCabe

19, Broad Street, Limerick, 8th June.

(Reprinted from "The Limerick Scandal")

FATHER TIERNEY

The hero of the following verses by Mr. O'Shannon is a Limerick priest generally known as "Father Tyranny". It was he who, some years ago, "blessed" the Shannon so violently that the fish died in it! He is also the author of the famous epigram. "Our bloods are up!"

The subject dealt with here is his wonderful coup on January 8th, 1901, in boycotting Colman's Mustard, because that firm had circulated a booklet for advertising purposes, containing "The Jackdaw of Rheims". What diabolical device against the Church this advertisement contained Heaven only and "Father" T. know; but then he boycotts nearly everything. 'Tis a way he has.

The "Confraternity" is an organization of which "Tyranny" is head — and tail. It contains a great many respectable and intelligent members, but they are so closely and constantly watched by the meaner minions of his Reverence, that they dare not call their souls their own. Tyranny has striven hard to use them as tools in carrying out his private spite against Dr. Long and the Medical Mission; but as he himself so pathetically said, "The women of Clare Street are worth dozens of them!" These unfortunate women are his paragons.

J.B.S.

November, 1901.

THE JACKDAW OF LIMERICK

An Ode To

TYRANNY

'Tis the night when the Arch-Confraternity meet,
Hark! there's a clatter of numerous feet
Swiftly emerging from alley and street;
"Prefect" and "Member" hurriedly greet:—
Surely a strange heterogenous throng!
Elbowing, jostling, and pushing along;
Gathering odour and strength on the way;
Some of them sporting a "hap orth o' clay;"
Some of them anxious their persons to show;
Some of them wishing they hadn't to go;
Some of them chafing 'neath cleric restraints,
Some of them would-be impossible saints;
Some who would worship an idol or joss
If decked with S. Andrew's (or Guinness') cross!
Now they are bound for their weekly instructions,
Knowing that sins of omission mean ructions.

"Prefect" and "Member" each in his place;
A look of concern you might easily trace
On many an eagerly-upturn'd face;
Knowing too well by that terrible frown
Which mantled on Tyranny's face looking down
That some fresh disturbance had come to the Town!
Some ventured to think 'twas the Medical Mission

Which stay'd on in Limerick without his permission,
 And after his "Reverence" had told it to go
 Had the brazen effront'ry to answer him "No!"
 The fact that he hasn't yet giv'n it his blessing,
 Accounts, people think, for the way its progressing:
 For all that great Tyranny happens to bless
 Is then ipso facto debarr'd from success!
 And all that great Tyranny happens to curse
 Is always the better and never the worse!
 He once with a "blessing" infected the Shannon
 Which proved more destructive than muskets or cannon;
 Whereat some poor fishers have been so distress'd
 That they've gone where the water's less potently
 bless'd.
 The remnant declare that "no other excursion
 They'll take with his Riv'ence except he goes cursin',"
 So on nine blessed days they have tramped round the city,
 With bell, book and candle, "the best spermaccti";
 And if this manoeuvre has any success
 He'll never again be commissioned to bless.

* * * * *

...deeper their looks of anxiety grew,
 And matters were looking exceedingly "blue"
 The war-cloud they dimly discern'd at the first
 Now over their heads seemed quite ready to burst.
 Some thought he had surely discovered a fraud,
 A rumour of which had been getting abroad,
 That Members could have themselves marked as being
 there,
 Who perhaps at that moment were taking the air,
 And were certainly some place that's known as
 "elsewhere!"
 Some good Members say 'tis a desperate plan
 To try to deceive an infallible man,
 And that sooner or later when such shall be caught,
 "Father" T. is the man to prescribe something hot!
 Some hinted of this, and some hinted of that,
 But not one of th' assembly the truth could come at;
 But all knew full well 'twas a terrible slip
 To fail to respond to the clerical whip!

Now the Roll had been called by those models of grace,
 The "Prefects" — keen-scented defections to trace,
 Superfine, well-selected in every case,
 The slave-driver's dignified duties to face!—
 This finished, each sits in his several place.

The pray'r has been offered, the hymn has been sung,
 But a shade like a pall o'er the meeting was hung,
 All still were a'guessing and greatly perplex'd
 At what had the wonderful Oracle vex'd,
 When his eye seemed to say, while his face became
 fluster'd,
 "Attention there, Prefects! Are all the men muster'd?"
 Apparently satisfied with the survey,
 He started to work without further delay.

Tho' often subjected to torrid addresses,
 Which baffled completely all sensible guesses;
 Tho' pretty well versed in their Orator's style.
 Which mainly consisted of "buncombe" and bile;
 They were greatly surprised, nor knew what must come
 next.
 When they found it was mustard he took for his text!

To be plain, the good man in the course of his reading,
 While fasting and studying the Science of Feeding,
 Perused the bad volume whereat he has blustered;
 'Twas issued by Colman advertising mustard,
 Wherein there was writ one of Ingoldsby's themes—
 The tale of the once profane Jackdaw or Rheims!

How little one knows when they've laid him to rest,
 And his bones are for centuries crumbled to dust

How the ghost of his crime may come back from his rust,
 To go, like Poe's Raven, at night "on a bust"
 And trouble the sensitive souls of the just!

Yet so did that poor little Jackdaw or Rheims
 Come back to play havoc with Tyranny's dreams,
 To pilfer his peace, and to shatter his rest,
 And bring back his curses as spoil to its nest!

So Colman, your mustard of memory glorious
 To put on the Index called "Expurgatorius",
 Because you've exploited a Heretic Daw
 In the teeth of the Church and Canonical Law!
 You should know that in Lim'rick we've Jackdaws
 galore,
 For, while Tyranny's here, we don't want any more.
 But you've made him dreadfully jealous, it seems
 Of that other black warbler, the Jackdaw or Rheims,
 Besides which, that crow was a very bad sample,
 Corrupting the Church with his evil example;
 Hence Colman avaunt! — keep the corcus away
 We never could teach him the orthodox lay
 Nor to cackle at all like our clerical jay.
 He'd come in the Arch-Confraternity's way,
 And having more brains, he would lead them astray!

Then sanctions most brilliant he dangled before 'em
 Rewards to remain secula seculorum.
 What wonder if some of that turbulent mass
 Went fairly ablaze with the heat of the gas?
 When this point had been reached, to describe it as warm
 Were putting the matter in too mild a form.
 Could you fancy a firebrand ablaze in a storm
 'Twould give an idea of th'Oracle's face,
 But you couldn't imagine the heat of the place!
 So, his malady growing contagious in turn.

* * * * *

Now, unless they admit themselves consummate fools,
 They might see the good "Father" just wanted some
 tools

To work out the plan he unfolded that night
 Which proved all his zeal, not for truth but for spite.
 No doubt there were some by his sophistry led
 Who thought Satan invented the Trade Mark "Bull's
 Head".

Since, for use upon anything living or dead
 They were never to use Colman's Mustard, he said,
 Nor anything else which that gentleman had,
 Since all 'neath that Trade-mark was vicious and bad.

No saint will deliver,
 Receiver or giver,
 Who after that night
 Handle's Bull's Head encasement,
 So deep his debasement
 His sin against Light.

Such sinners will suffer what no one can tell,
 They'll burn in Mustard instead of a hell,
 Which no one must doubt, for his Riv'ence should know
 Must better than many what passes below.
 For it "fellow feeling makes wonderously kind",
 He should know by experience the "Ould Fellow's mind!"
 Up went their hands — were they troops on parade,
 His order had scarce been more promptly obeyed
 To register the vow they so suddenly made,
 As after their prompter they duteously said;
 They'd have nothing to do with that cussed Bull's-head!

* * * * *

He "goes in for" Religion - no one can doubt it-
 Yet none will deny that he COMES OUT without it.
 Some think (and with a cause) that the Medical Mission
 Has emphasized sadly his indisposition
 And giv'n him a pill which has stuck in his craw
 Which all the Church physic can never withdraw.

POEMS

by
Desmond O'Grady

HERONS

They wing in each evening close
across the bay from the open sea
when the moon's up. They're a love pair.
He leads, she follows and they call
each to each in their flight - a love call
that directs. Alone here at my word
sorting I await their cry nightly for its
reassurance. It gives me pause and stirs
strong thoughts of you now gone elsewhere.

Landed they step about the beach beside
the sea's seamed edge like courtiers in their
palace of rock, wrack and sea sound.
When they're late I'm nervous, full-fiddle
with distractions. Their first cry heard far out
I settle back and steady. It's their hour
and I feel surer knowing now they're here,
as word arrived of you brings you here.

Some mornings, early, I creep up close to watch them.
Their stilt legs, thin and grained as twigs,
knob at the bend; their haughty heads shaped
for pince-nez; tapered bill bent at the tip.
Shapely neck and feathered frame majestic
their elegant, isolated reserve teaches.

At dawn this morning I walked round the bay
to town. Suddenly, in the rushes, I found the cock
stone dead. Some ignorant local lout
has surely shot it. The female's flown away.

ST. JOHN'S DAY, MIDSUMMER

Today's the summer's strength's decline.
The sun, castrate, sets on his graveward
course. Triumph and endurance combine
at midday as heaven and hell mouth their Word.

Tonight we build our needfire high
with the full flowered oak, kindled east
and west on our mucklewheel. The old way
used a gallows' rope. That day's past.

In the bonfire's blaze we'll eat roast meat
and drink, dance frantic round the flame.
Before the dawn we'll bear the light
by stick or candle safely home

and ring our bells loud "John! St. John!"
This practice's long dead now in town.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY

Holiday today, all day. We taste the new made
wine. The farmers, in from all around for morning
mass, gathered about in clots, stiff in hot suits
and boots, chins rasped sharp as razors.
Hatchethead faces cross-hatched as their ploughed fields
they'll start tomorrow. Our greybeard local stump
of a parish priest's in the thick of them. Outside,
the donkeys tethered in knots attend like drovers.

Today's all smile and handshake, toast and drink
long life. Teeth flash smiles at a yarn. Glint
of an old man's still young mischevous eye.
Some deals get made: rent a plot for ploughing;
arrange that bull for service; agree on next year's
prices; discuss a dowry; this day past years;
who died since then; dread of a too cold winter.
Rude fingers, rough as drystonee walls, clutch
glasses gently for each toast to next year.

The women, hidden in their houses, make small talk
on marriages, illness, dowry houses, childbirth.

The young, in pairs, tonight in this saint's day's houses
will dance to local music. That's our way round here.

DAYS

Our days make more sense here this summer
after winter's madness, hurt and loss.
You're here to rest so sleep in late. I
start the morning chores in silence, early:

After my chill plunge through the sea's steeled face
I draw buckets of water from the upper
well that's cleaner, wash the farmer's
fruit and brew our coffee. The sun stronger
I order papers indoors on my work table.

Small birds make music under the terrace
eves and acrobat about, or mark a musical
notation on the telephone lines beyond the house.

Your slow wake up and smile wakes warm
memories. Here we're safe from outside harm.

SPRING

Our stony land's hot flower.
Behind, the mountain's riddled
rich hot colour. The wind's
from the north - that signals good
weather. I've dropped the city,
live by the sea in the country.

Halfway through my works and days,
hammered dumb by the town's
torment, I walked out.
Here, in my halfway house,
at forty years of age,
I start this fresh blank page.